Central European Cultures 1, no. 1 (2021): 75–92
https://doi.org/10.47075/CEC.2021-1.04

CEC | Central European Cultures

Imposed Belonging

Family Crises in Poland in Film and Literature around 1968[1]

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Received 25 April 2020 | Accepted 14 October 2020 | Published online 31 March 2021

Abstract. The concept and realization of family and gender issues in socialist Poland was generally a contested topic. The family had remained a core institution of society—and yet, it underwent a significant transformation due to changing life-style models and social expectations. In the late 1960s, a crisis of the family was officially acknowledged, as the new models and expectations increasingly conflicted with the shortage of economic and social resources, and systemic limitations. Diverging ideas about gender roles and stereotypes intensified the tensions in the family and private sphere. This article discusses manifestations of the family crisis in literature and film of the time, tracing the issues debated in society and uncovering dominant narratives. Social problems like alcoholism or domestic violence found their way into official statistics as well as into literary or cinematographic productions, the arts presenting a qualitative seismology of the family in crisis. In staging issues like partnership pragmatism or a "monetarization" of gender relations, literature and film functioned as an introspective tool for social and cultural discourses. This cultural debate on the family crisis will be cross-read with the March 1968 crisis in Poland. The student revolts, their repression and an anti-Semitic campaign, events known as "March '68", brought about an ethno-nationalist paradigm in politics and society that silently reframed family lineage as a socially and politically relevant dimension. Yet the narrative of class and ethnic family liability suggested by the mass media went mostly unregistered in the arts, emerging only on the margins of cultural production.

Keywords: Poland, family, crisis, film, literature

Introduction

The topic of family in socialist Poland was and still is a contested issue. While some interpret the socialist system as toppling gender roles and wreaking havoc on traditional values, others praise the (secret) revolution in power relations, pointing

1 A first version of this paper, in German, was presented at the Fifth Congress of Polish studies at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in March 2020. I would like to thank Heidi Hein-Kircher for inviting me to join the panel, as well as my fellow presenters and discussants for their input.

out the economic and socio-political key role women achieved in the sphere of family and household management. Still others hold the opinion that actually, gender relations and the inherited image of the family did not change significantly.[2] In my paper, I would like to focus on family issues at the historical mid-point of the Polish People's Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL) around the year 1968. For most Poles, the late 1960s signified an insidious destabilization of first party secretary Władysław Gomułka's political "small stabilization" (*mała stabilizacja*). Discontent over political and economic stagnation grew, evoking an inner-party power struggle as well as social instabilities.[3] Moreover, the 1960s saw the coming of age of the first post-war generation raised fully under the auspices of the socialist system.[4] The specific moment of "March '68" marks a civil upheaval demanding reform of the system, supported by many young Poles, and its repression by the state. This repression was "on the one hand the hardest proof of the stability of the system, on the other—a merciless, even if for many surprising, unveiling of its falseness,"[5] writes journalist Zbigniew Gluza in the introduction to a book about Polish life in 1968. This year is thus often seen as a turning point in the history of the socialist system, as the repression, combined with an officially promoted anti-Semitic campaign, put paid to the belief in a communist society,[6] and "with time would change the collective consciousness."[7]

What impact did the historical context and socialist concept of society have on the family? How did the economic stagnation of the 1960s and changing gender images translate into family contexts? What did the family signify in the context of the repression of the youth protests in 1968 and the anti-Semitic campaign of 1967–70? With these questions in mind, I will examine the Polish discourse on family around 1968 in literature and cinema produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In my reading, I will concentrate on the notion of a "crisis of family"[8] in the late 1960s and the problem of social belonging.

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2 Fidelis, *Women*; Kałwa, "Between Emancipation and Traditionalism," 175–88; Graff, *Świat bez kobiet*, 22–24; Keinz, *Polens Andere*, 107; Watson, "Eastern Europe's Silent Revolution," 472, 483; Desperak, "Kobiety," 179; Frieske, "Poza stereotypami," 198.

3 Kurz, "Konsumpcja," 151; Sielezin, "Niektóre aspekty," 197–98; Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL*, 326; Zaremba, "Społeczeństwo polskie lat sześćdziesiątych," 24–51; Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande*, 97–98, 284.

4 Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland," 43, 48; Michnik, "Moje pokolenie, mój bunt," 5; Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL*, 343–65.

5 Gluza, "Od wydawcy," 5.

6 Gawin, *Wielki zwrot*, 176–87; Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland," 47; Siermiński, *Dekada przełomu*, 19–32; Świda-Ziemba, *Młodzież PRL*, 453–55.

7 Gluza, "Od wydawcy," 5.

8 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 235.

Fraying families

In Poland in the 1960s and 1970s, it had already become very clear that the socialist system would not abolish the institution of the family; rather, the family was identified as a main pillar of a socialist society, too.[9] However, neither the lived reality of families as seen from a sociological perspective, nor the family's cultural image, had distinct contours. The two-generation nuclear family with one or two children became increasingly consolidated, especially in urban Poland.[10] Still, the nuclear family was not necessarily the dominant form of the 1960s. Although an extended family no longer necessarily lived under the same roof or in direct vicinity, it was still present in daily affairs: female wage work outside the home proved to be impractical without the help of grandparents or other relatives—mostly women—in childcare.[11] Even if a family model based on partnership relations gained popularity, the transferring of care work onto the male partner proceeded slowly, if at all.[12] Care institutions outside the family home provided by the state further questioned distinct definitions of family borders. These institutions were intended both to guarantee a socialist education for the children and to address the lack of parental time resources in the increasing economic stagnation.[13]

Thus, the emotional and economic relations that make up the family appear to have been multi-relational and disseminated over several places; the concept of family seems to have been permeable and unstable, even though it surely had an everyday practical framework on the individual level. An example of such a multi-relational family can be found in the short story *Rodzina* (Family) by Marek Nowakowski, which was published in 1969.[14] A pluricentric family network, consisting of three or four main households, is connected through siblings and parent-children relations. These family blood ties, however, are mainly interpreted by the protagonists in terms of financial claims; emotional bonds are almost absent and formed beyond direct family relations. There is a contest for affection directed at the members of the most industrious family household, consisting of an unmarried brother and sister. The central stage of the story is not their home but their field, where other relatives send their children to try to gain attention and financial

9 Sokołowska, "Woman Image," 45.

10 Wrochno, *Die Frau*, 53.

11 Sokołowska, *Kobieta pracująca*, 178; Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 83–97.

12 Czerwiński, *Przemiany obyczaju*, 44, 98–103; Sokołowska, *Kobieta pracująca*, 60, 172–76; Sokołowska, "Woman Image"; Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 49–63; Walczewska, *Damy, rycerze i feministki*, 88. This is not the place to answer the question of whether this phenomenon was due to systematic hindrances or resistances by the male or female partner.

13 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 266–68.

14 Nowakowski, *Opowiadania wybrane*, 353–73.

benefits. However, they gradually integrate into their family household first a neighbor, and later a great-niece and an illegitimate son—much to the dismay of the rest of the extended family.[15]

Rodzina clearly lays out some of the family issues discussed at the turn to the 1970s: a lack of understanding, affection and interpersonal bonding within the family and between relatives; the question of income and economic shortages, leading to a dependence on mutual support in the extended family; finally the gendered imbalance of responsibility for covering basic needs.[16] Not mentioned here, however, are the 1960s' family issues connected to post-war geographical and social mobility in the building of a communist society.

Generational moves

While Nowakowski's *Rodzina* is presumably set in a village or small town, most of the cultural production of the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on urban life. Moreover, the move of the younger generation from the rural parts of Poland towards the cities, paired with ongoing changes in the social sphere, figures as an issue in film and literature. Due to massive population movements, there was a strong general sense of rootlessness, be it geographically, socially or with regard to the newly constructed coordinates of post-war values and ethics.[17] These generational shifts in work and social models further exacerbate instabilities and divergences in families and in their members' biographies.

Krzysztof Zanussi's film *Życie rodzinne* (Family Life), for example, shows such a shift in life models.[18] The film, released in 1971, accompanies a promising young engineer called Ziemowit (Wit) Braun back to his family home, where his father is allegedly dying. Even before this turns out to be a set-up to lure him back, it becomes clear that Wit is unable to interact affectively with his sister and aunt. The encounter of the family members is marked by disappointment, dissociation and emotional complexes. Wit feels abandoned and at the same time trapped by his family background, while desperately seeking affection and understanding from his father.

Set against its socio-historical background, *Życie rodzinne* gains more depth. Wit adapts and builds himself a "normal" life and career in a technologically developing industry. This sets him apart from his bourgeois family, lavishly dwelling in

15 Nowakowski, *Opowiadania wybrane*, 368–71.

16 The elderly husband of one family suddenly decides to stop working, leaving the task of worrying about how to provide for the family to his wife. Nowakowski, *Opowiadania wybrane*, 365–67, 373.

17 Czapliński, "PRL i sarmatyzm"; Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 14–15.

18 Zanussi, *Życie rodzinne*.

a villa which is falling into disrepair, refusing to acknowledge the communist system and actually breaking its moral and economic rules. The disintegration of the family is signaled in the oil painting of the emigrée mother, shortly to be sold to "some American".[19] But while this bourgeois world seems to be doomed to the past, its inhabitants are more lively and rebellious than Wit, who avoids disturbances but fails to quite meet his goals. He is full of complexes because of his family background: as we learn from his friend Marek who accompanies him, he never mentioned his family and bourgeois home.[20] This turns his friend against him. Marek, coming from a peasant family and teased for his coarse physical features by Wit's sister Bella, seems to have far fewer problems adapting to both the eccentricities of the Braun family and socialist life as an engineer—unlike Wit, Marek can at least boast of his own car.

Apart from the geographical distances between family members, we thus also find emotional rifts due to growing social distancing. Especially in view of the post-March anti-elitist atmosphere and promotion of descendants of lower-class families in Poland—a topic I will return to—, the decisions taken by Wit become clearer, and the conflict between him and Marek gains another dimension. Their conflict also mirrors the cultural conflicts taking place over the establishment of a new, yet often precarious "socialist middle class".[21]

Intergenerational differences in value systems and the attempt to break free from the older generation find their expression in literature as well. Tadeusz Konwicki's fantastical novel *Zwierzoczłekoupiór* (The Anthropos-Specter-Beast, 1969) is significant in this respect. Even though there is no conflict between the generations, the main protagonist, a boy called Piotr, treats his parents in their somewhat naive, petty bourgeois world rather as museum pieces. The precocious Piotr, boosting about "having read all the books in the house" and knowing everything better,[22] ostentatiously references and trusts only the hard facts of mathematics and technological progress, while he claims to be independent of a need for emotional proximity (a statement that is refuted in the storyline itself).

Couples with potential: family pragmatism

While Wit in *Życie rodzinne* dreams of his socialist-idyllic future family home when watching a young family in a new block, the young man in another film nurtures this idea in a much less romantic way. Doctor Tomasz Piechocki, the main protagonist

19 Zanussi, *Życie rodzinne*, 26:30.

20 Zanussi, *Życie rodzinne*, 20:42; 1:17:42.

21 Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 69.

22 Konwicki, *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 6, 22–23, 65. "Przeczytałem już wszystkie książki, jakie są w naszym domu."

in Leon Jeannot's 1969 film *Człowiek z M-3* (Man with an Apartment), is looking for a wife in order to obtain a flat.[23] It was very difficult to move into one's own apartment in communist Poland, as owing to significant shortages newly built apartments were assigned by the local authorities.[24] This was especially relevant for young people wanting to move out from their parents' home and for young couples starting their own families. The latter—so-called *małżeństwa rozwojowe*, "developmental married couples"[25]—were the ones with the strongest claims to new or bigger apartments, but even so, they often had to await their turn for years.[26]

With this in mind, it becomes evident at once why doctor Piechocki sees the chance of a lifetime when he receives an assignment for an apartment and the imminent opportunity to move away from his dominant mother. The comedy film shows his frantic attempts to find a spouse in a month—with the deadline approaching, any spouse at all. Of course, comedies could pick up on societal ailments in a way that both exaggerated and played them down. Emotional bonding is not even mentioned, and marriage resembles a completely pragmatic, if not annoying matter for Piechocki in *Człowiek z M-3*. He tries his luck with one woman after another, picking them up and dropping them with feverish haste. Perhaps surprisingly, most of the women seem to be aware of the stakes, teaming up with him for a short while before getting dumped or dumping him themselves.

With the male perspective as the dominant view in cultural production,[27] women were framed as objects of consumption, as in *Człowiek z M-3*, but also as motors of developing consumerism. Gender relations in general were increasingly portrayed as being dominated by a materialistic world view. With the beginning of the 1970s and the era of first party secretary Edward Gierek, growing expectations of living standards were met with a superficial solution to the economic crisis and a stabilization of product supplies.[28] Together with an increasing awareness of fashion and technological trends in the West, a popularization of modernized Polish (or imported) commodities and habits took place. In Wiesław Jażdżyński's novel *Sprawa* (The Case, 1969), an (unmarried) couple fills its household with technical gadgets, and the female partner organizes their days strictly according to a wholesome regime.[29] Cinematographic examples of these developments and discourses are *Polowanie na muchy* (Hunting Flies, 1969) by Andrzej Wajda or *Rewizja*

23 Jeannot, *Człowiek z M-3*.

24 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 257–58.

25 Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie*, 12.

26 Szpakowska, *Chcieć i mieć*, 34–35; Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 83.

27 Sokołowska, "Woman Image," 47; Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 80.

28 Kurz, "Konsumpcja," 151–54.

29 Jażdżyński, *Sprawa*, 130–31, 154.

osobista (Personal Search, 1973) by Andrzej Kostenko and Witold Leszczyński.[30] In both films, family and gender relations are sketched as proto-monetary relations, circling around the satisfaction of the demand for goods of (mostly) the female protagonists. Furthermore, sexual behavior is designed in the framework of supply and demand as well, portrayed as a commodity of short duration and minor satisfaction-value.[31] Importantly, by staging the sexual interaction as being initiated mostly by women, these films do not so much show us the effect of female sexual emancipation as that of the male imagination of an increased availability of female bodies and sexuality. A similar analysis is presented by film historian Monika Talarczyk-Gubała in her book about Polish comedy films, when she notes that at the end of the 1960s the male-produced "image of the woman on screen became more sharpened,"[32] disturbing the generally good-humored tone in comedies with an aggressive rhetoric of "gender war."

Female emancipation and male downfall?

If we take a closer look at the so-called *nowoczesne dziewczyny* (modern girls)[33] in their literary portrayal, we rarely find an encouraging image. For example Cecylia, a friend of the family in Konwicki's *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, can be considered an embodiment of the "Amazon invasion" which the male-dominated discourse of the 1960s and 1970s warned about. In the face of a perceived power imbalance in favor of women, especially in dominating the private sphere, media discourse and sociological studies spoke of a toppling of the gender order, chaos in the family and the crisis of the male.[34] Cecylia figures as independent, loud and domineering; she has the last word in every conversation. But unlike Piotr's parents, she actually has plans for the future and tries to engage others. Piotr sometimes calls her a "monster";[35] and yet, apart from the somewhat mocking treatment of this figure, a certain sympathy or identification with her point of view seems to emerge from the story. In the end, Cecylia shares the same fate as everyone else—a dependence on the external forces of institutions or of a potential meteorite impact on Earth.

30 Wajda, *Polowanie na muchy*; Kostenko and Leszczyński, *Rewizja osobista*.

31 Kostenko and Leszczyński, *Rewizja osobista*, 53:02–1:01:28.

32 Talarczyk-Gubała, *PRL się śmieje!*, 80.

33 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 249.

34 Czerwiński, *Przemiany obyczaju*, 91–93; Graczyk, "Być kobietą?," 233–34; Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 249; Piotrowski, "Badania nad pozycją społeczną," 25; Sokołowska, "Płeć a przemiany obyczaju," 165–69.

35 Konwicki, *Zwierzoczłekoupiór*, 13. "potwór."

A similar position of female semi-emancipation is evident in Nowakowski's short story *Gonitwa* (The Hunt). The main protagonist, a wife and mother, falls in love with the teacher of her daughter. With this love story, she follows her very own desires, while her family life fades to a background chore carried out half-unconsciously. However, her new way of life is an in-between existence, marked by dishonesty towards her husband and a constant "hunt" after her lover.[36] The latter is unable to perform sexually, which serves as an excuse for him to evade her rather than posing a problem for her—maybe another hint at the failing self-confidence of the male population in view of more self-determined women. In contrast to some aggressive filmic portrayals, the alleged "Amazons" in both literary examples are depicted as being just as much entangled in their life realities and systemic limitations as their male fellows. These limitations, however, are not actively, let alone collectively, contested, thus appearing as unchangeable features of society. Instead, the figures try to find individual loopholes to reach personal freedom.[37]

The male partner in the family structure, on the other hand, often seems to be defined mainly by his fitness to earn the family's living and guarantee a certain standard—a functional role which is not very promising in terms of self-fulfillment. This might be why in the Polish reality of the late 1960s as well as in its literary embodiment, alcoholism dominated the discussion about family problems due to a period of economic crisis and social change, growing into a so-called "crisis of the family".[38] In *Gonitwa*, Nowakowski introduces the husband Józek—from his wife's point of view—as follows:

> Józek returns from work tired, he is a turner in a lamp factory, he comes, lies down, sleeps, then listens to the radio, looks at the newspaper and so the day goes by. He's calm, she doesn't complain about him, he drinks rarely, and after vodka he is cheerful, good-natured, affectionate at night [...]. Really, a fine guy, he doesn't waste money, doesn't look at other women. The neighbor from the ground floor envies her for this peaceful, good life. Her husband likes to drink, then he doesn't come home, but wanders around somewhere in pubs with whores, and later screams, quarrels in their apartment.[39]

36 Nowakowski, *Opowiadania wybrane*, 400, 405–6, 415–16.

37 This depiction corresponds to the findings of Jakub Muchowski, who identified a narrative of self-help in young people's accounts of their lonely struggles for a better future. See Muchowski, "Intimacies under State Socialism?."

38 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 268–69; Sokołowska, *Kobieta pracująca*, 169. From the mid-1960s onwards, a substantial increase in alcohol consumption per capita led to an intensification of the social problem of male drunkenness.

39 Nowakowski, *Opowiadania wybrane*, 377. "Józek wraca z roboty zmęczony, jest tokarzem w fabryce lamp, przyjdzie, kładzie się, śpi, potem posłucha radia, przejrzy gazetę i tak mija dzień.

If the husband is a (heavy) drinker, family life is threatened because wife and children are subject to violent behavior on part of their husband and father. Moreover, drinking habits could seriously threaten the family's financial well-being, pushing the female spouse to further exploit her own workforce in extra wage work. The relationship between spouses, especially after some years of marriage, is in many literary and cinematographic examples depicted as purely functional. While the husband depends on his partner to provide for the management of the family and balance the finances, the wife negatively depends on her husband's behavior for her physical, mental and economic well-being.[40]

Both aspects—financial dependency and physical oppression—are starkly depicted in Anna Świrszczyńska's poetry. In her volume of poems *Jestem baba* (I'm a woman), published in 1972, Świrszczyńska sketches everyday life situations of rural, urban, young and old women, pointing out many problems in family constellations as well, for example in her poems *Wieczorem po wypłacie* (Payday evening)[41] or *Rodzina* (Family):

> He approaches her
> with fists.
>
> From his pants he flicks off like a fly
> two little hands
> that wanted to stop him.[42]

In *Powrót męża* (The Husband's Return), Świrszczyńska suggests that domestic violence was not an isolated phenomenon, but a common practice, tolerated by a society that showed no interest in the neighbors' fate and physical integrity.[43] Moreover, in the poet's eyes, women's lives were marked by continuous strain and suffering. Hardly more than one of many protagonists revolts. The one protest arising in *Jestem baba* consists solely in "she doesn't want to suffer"[44] like her mother did.

Spokojny, nie narzeka na niego, pije nieczęsto, a po wódce wesoły, dobroduszny, czuły wtedy w nocy niezgrabnie [...]. Właściwie udany chłop, forsy nie puszcza, za babami nie ogląda się. Sąsiadka z parteru zazdrości jej tego spokojnego, dobrego życia. Jej mąż popić lubi, nie wraca wtedy do domu, włóczy się gdzieś po knajpach z dziwkami, i później krzyki, awantury w ich mieszkaniu."

40 Sokołowska, *Kobieta pracująca*, 161, 168–69.

41 Świrszczyńska, *Jestem Baba*, 24.

42 Świrszczyńska, *Jestem Baba*, 26. "Idzie do niej / z pięściami. // Strzepnął z portek jak muchę / dwie małe ręce, / które go chciały zatrzymać."

43 Świrszczyńska, *Jestem Baba*, 23.

44 Świrszczyńska, *Jestem Baba*, 49. "ona nie chce cierpieć."

Missing bonding, imposed bonds

To sum up, the examination of a medley of literature and film in almost all aspects shows up the impossibility of bonding, when it comes to the depiction of families' transgenerational or partner relations. Parents and their children seemed to live in increasingly different worlds—worlds transformed by societal change and economic or technological progress. These developments also suggest an intensified individualism, with a growing relevance of economic and social success in a material world for the younger generation. Gender relations as well were often portrayed in literature and film as lacking in understanding and affection. Instead, a general pragmatism and institutionalism appeared to dominate relationships. However, these imposed bonds were marked by an imbalance: while female characters were often portrayed as determined and progressive (whether in a positively or negatively depicted way), male characters often lacked decisiveness and a sense of responsibility for others, showing instead a tendency towards laissez-faire, alcoholism and domestic violence. Resulting from this were, if we are to believe the suggestions of film and literature, increasing discord and ill humor between the spouses and in the family, translating back into their relations with their social environment. Hardly mentioned in film and literature, however, were "modern" aspects of couple and family life like contraceptives or divorce,[45] the growing incidence of the latter being one of the main manifestations of the perceived "crisis of the family".[46]

Even if the family became flanked by other institutions in communist Poland, it was still a core element of society due to both social traditions and the compulsion of the state system.[47] Of course, a "crisis of the family" also meant a corruption of society at its very heart. Even though this was registered by state officials,[48] the way family issues were tightly bound up with state administration and economic dynamics made it very difficult to battle against this "private" crisis. Conversely, these entanglements even increased the compulsory aspect of the family, divorce being a possible but socially and economically difficult decision to take. Thus, the family chained individuals together in good or ill fate. This inevitability of family ties can be observed also on a political level, when it comes to the events of March 1968. In this context, family relations gained even more political weight and importance as an instrument of discrimination or reward. I will now turn briefly to this

45 Although divorce is occasionally mentioned as a possibility—or impossibility, as in the 1963 film *Rozwodów nie będzie* (There will be no divorces) by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński—in the context of the pragmatic marriage.

46 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 266. The other manifestations were "weakening of the bonds between parents and children, alcoholism of the parents, […] feeling of isolation of youth."

47 Sokołowska, "Woman Image," 45.

48 Kosiński, *Oficjalne i prywatne życie*, 231–72.

topic, explaining another important aspect of "family" around 1968, even though this aspect might have gone unnoticed—or been pushed into the background of their conscious life experience—by the majority of Polish citizens.[49]

Family as a genealogical threat

In Poland, "March '68" functions as the marker of two distinct but intertwined strands. On the one hand, in early spring 1968, endeavors to reform the socialist system and youth protests demanding more social, cultural and political freedom were crushed by the force of the militia and political oppression. On the other hand, in the years between 1967 and 1970 there was an officially encouraged anti-Semitic campaign, accusing Poles of Jewish descent of "Zionism" and of elitist, anti-socialist "revisionism".[50] In the context of these events and discourses, the family became more important as a political instrument on the level of class and ethnic origin. In the repression and media campaign against students and "Zionists", the "class-struggle" element and anti-intelligentsia resentment were promoted by constructing an image of a privileged elite hostile to socialism and contrasting it with an ideal of socialist citizens of ethnic Polish working-class and peasant origins.[51]

The Machiavellian element of this image becomes evident as, in the repressive campaign against the youthful protesters, it was mainly those with parents in high positions in the state or party hierarchy who were prosecuted or imprisoned. Later on, it was precisely these parents who lost their positions partly because of their children's "misbehavior".[52] As we can read in a list of protesting students sent by the Ministry of the Interior to the politburo in 1967, the students' names were noted as follows: "Szyr Joanna, daughter of vice premier, Chaber Józef, son of deputy head of unit of Central Committee"[53] etc. Evidently, the parents were not mentioned for better identification, as they do not appear by name; rather their positions in the system denoted the children's political condemnation as anti-social(ist) elements who had dared to turn against the system from a privileged position.

The instrumentalization of family relations became particularly clear with the anti-Semitic campaign of 1967–70. Socio- and biopolitical mechanisms of exclusion

49 Koszarska-Szulc and Romik, "Estranged," 29.

50 Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," 237–51; Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland"; Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele*; Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 205–39; Tych, "'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign," 451–71.

51 Checinski, *Poland*, 229; Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór*, 134.

52 Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 238.

53 Cit. after Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór*, 175. "Szyr Joanna córka v-premiera, Chaber Józef syn z-cy kier. Wydz. KC".

were used to disqualify Poles of Jewish descent from Polish society.[54] The security service attributed political attitudes on the basis of ethnic origin, imputing anti-socialist and anti-Polish opinions and practices to Poles "whose parents are Jewish."[55] This is even more ironic if we consider that for many Poles of Jewish descent who still resided in Poland, their ethnic origin meant very little indeed, if they even knew about it—many younger Poles came to know or fully realize their Jewish family background only because of social stigmatization during the anti-Jewish campaign.[56] Again, the mechanism was working in two directions: as the Polish literary scholar Maria Janion remembers, her condemnation of anti-Semitism in a lecture in March 1968 was received by her students as proof of her being Jewish.[57] An expression of solidarity beyond family or ethnic bonds seems to have been beyond their imagination—quite an impressive reduction if we consider the still circulating communist imperative for international solidarity among the oppressed.

The narrative of international solidarity was subordinated in the 1960s to an ever more dominant paradigm of national or ethno-nationalist communism.[58] This political and social paradigm, focusing on proletarian or peasant "Polishness", led to a discursive fetishization of ethnic and class origin in the late 1960s, culminating in the exclusion of "Zionists". The veiling strategies used to cover up an unpopular lineage can be traced in films such as Zanussi's *Życie rodzinne*, where his bourgeois family background is a taboo topic for the main protagonist. What is more, the over-signification of family lineage and ethnicity not only affected, but took over even those who opposed national communism. The writer Anna Kowalska notes in her diary for 18 May 1968: "Call from Ania Linke. She's coming on Monday. Under these circumstances I can't refuse anyone who is a Jew."[59] The national communist paradigm imposed itself on vast swathes of society, even if they tried to turn it around in positive discrimination.

For "anyone who is Jewish", this denotation resulted in an almost complete social isolation from society, sentencing them mostly to the company of their

54 Banas, *Scapegoats*, 54–55; Checinski, *Poland*, 229–32; Koszarska-Szulc and Romik, "Estranged," 29; Kowalski, *Polens letzte Juden*, 163–65; Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 242–58; Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie"; Tych, "'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign."

55 Eisler, "March 1968 in Poland," 240; Osęka and Zaremba, "Wojna po wojnie," 227; Tych, "'March '68' Antisemitic Campaign," 462.

56 Grudzinska Gross, "1968 in Poland," 49; Korb, *Ni pies, ni wydra*, 76–82, 106; Koszarska-Szulc, Romik, and Michnik, "Party Descends Directly from the Fascist Right," 53.

57 Janion and Szczuka, *Janion*, 141.

58 Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other*, 248; Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 65–71; Zaremba, *Im nationalen Gewande*, 271–358.

59 Kowalska, *Dzienniki, 1927–1969*, 521. "Telefon Ani Linke. Przyjdzie w poniedziałek. W tych okolicznościach nie mogę odmówić nikomu, kto jest Żydem."

equally affected relatives or ethnic peers.[60] Family relations also started to work as a transmission belt for incorporated trauma and social fears.[61] Nowakowski suggests in his *Zapiski z lat 1967–1968* (Notes from the years 1967–1968) the awakening of fears born in the war years that were sleeping in the parents' bodies: "The mother of this girl is a woman over fifty years old, calm and quiet, but there is always some fear lurking in her eyes. She is reluctant to talk about her life during the occupation." The unnamed fears, bursting out in panic attacks around 1968, also affect the woman's daughter quite physically, making her "bend and close her eyes as if before a blow" on hearing her colleagues laugh behind her back.[62]

The impact of the paradigm of national communism is less visible in the cinema and literature of the years around 1968. While the socio-economic and patriarchal crisis of the family had many expressions in the arts—a rather dark picture of broken family bonds and disorderly gender relations—, the family lineage as a socio-political threat does not receive much mention at the time. The relevance of genealogy comes to the fore retrospectively, scattered in secret archive material, newspaper cuttings, diaries, unpublished notes and memoirs written years later. It is intriguing that a "monetarization" of family partnership and ostentatious pragmatism, social problems like alcoholism or domestic violence, found their way into official literary or cinematographic production, while a narrative of class and ethnic liability for genealogical ties, powerfully promoted by the media, went mostly unrecorded in artistic production. Explicit references to the "March" experiences are overwhelmingly absent from the official cultural products of the time. This might be because the shock of "March 1968" mainly affected the very social strata that were active in cultural production, considering the repression of literates or students e.g. of the Fine Arts Academy. Moreover, many Poles who underwent discrimination during the anti-Semitic campaign were forced to emigrate.[63] Thus, the "March" element of the family crisis of the late 1960s, an element of biopolitical scale, was glossed over with elements that focused on social issues of everyday life in between state institutions and private obligations.

60 Korb, *Ni pies, ni wydra*, 193; Koszarska-Szulc and Romik, "Estranged"; Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*, 87.

61 See Tanikowski, "Explicit and Implicit," 295–96, for the reactivation of "a particular form of Holocaust memory" and its expression in artistic forms. Also Koszarska-Szulc, Romik, and Michnik, "Party Descends Directly from the Fascist Right," 57.

62 Nowakowski, *Syjoniści do Syjamu*, 13–14. "Matka tej dziewczyny jest kobietą przeszło pięćdziesięcioletnią, spokojną i cichą, ale w jej oczach czai się zawsze jakiś strach. O swoim życiu podczas okupacji niechętnie opowiada. […] garbiła się i przymykała oczy jak przed uderzeniem."

63 Gawin, *Wielki zwrot*, 142; Majmurek, "Memory of March in Films," 260; Osęka, "Marzec 68," 144; Tanikowski, "Explicit and Implicit," 290.

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